

photograph

Lois Conner: The Long View

Gitterman Gallery, New York



Lois Conner, *Bronx Botanical Garden, New York*, 1990. ©Lois Conner, courtesy Gitterman Gallery

Landscape photographer Lois Conner is known for the elegant platinum prints she's made over three decades of photographing in China, which she first visited in 1984 on a Guggenheim Fellowship. (Her book, *Beijing: Contemporary and Imperial*, was published this year by Princeton Architectural Press.) The works on view at the Gitterman Gallery through November 15, however, are evidence of a consistency of vision no matter where Conner sets up camp, whether it is the Badlands in South Dakota, a Louisiana swamp, urban rooftops, or pondside, where she's photographed lily pads floating on the still, velvety surface of the water.

Because the works on view are all platinum prints in greys and inky blacks, and because they were all made with a banquet camera, which elongates the images (they are either 7 by 17 inches or 17 by 7), they tend to have the formal, reserved qualities of Chinese scroll paintings, even if the subject is a twisted tree in the Bronx Botanical Garden. The shared qualities of these exquisite prints – the nearly cloudless grey skies standing in for blank canvases, the unpeopled scenes, the deep shadows and highly detailed texture of each image – can make it difficult to focus on the distinctive characteristics of each place.



Lois Conner, *Baton Rouge, Louisiana*, 1988. ©Lois Conner, courtesy Gitterman Gallery

Perhaps for this reason, it was the more unexpected, less conventionally scenic views that stood out for me: *Baton Rouge, Louisiana*, from 1988, a fog-enshrouded view of sight lines converging, with an oncoming train on curved tracks, the latticework of a low bridge in the distance, and a pickup truck listing on the embankment. *Port Allen, Louisiana*, 1988, gives a timeless quality to a scrap-filled yard dotted with a couple of chickens and an empty clothesline. And the dark, lonesome view of a long-abandoned canoe in a wooded grove, also in Louisiana, could be a 19th-century landscape painting, laden with symbolism.

— *By Jean Dykstra* 10/10/2014